

# Building on Success

## The Opportunities Ahead


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Teacher Kermit Wigen teaching 6th grade LST in Lacrosse


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Lacrosse students participating in a LST lesson

*Life Skills Training ..... A Collaborative Success in Educational Service District 101*

***"Life Skills is an awesome class. The students like it a lot! They enjoy the class so much that they clap when it is time for "Life Skills"! If they don't get it all I hear is: "When will you come to our class?". Life Skills is effective in that it develops student's critical thinking skills and challenges them to engage themselves in real life situations where they can apply what they learn and feel good about making healthy choices! The Life Skills class is most certainly a fun and effective class that students enjoy, teachers appreciate, and parents support."***  
Phil Eager  
Student Assistance Specialist  
Mary Walker and Davenport School Districts.

ESD 101 began partnering with schools to implement the Life Skills Training (LST) program four years ago when awarded an implementation grant through the Blueprints for Violence Program with the University of Colorado. Originally, there was only one school district in ESD 101 implementing the Life Skills Training curriculum. The program has grown to serve 17 school districts and even though the implementation grant has ended, ESD 101 is working to recruit even more districts this year!

ESD 101 has partnered with various community agencies and school districts to provide trainings, creating a wide base of teachers trained and able to deliver the curriculum with fidelity. Community partners have included: DASA Prevention Specialists in Lincoln, Spokane and Whitman counties; Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council's Prevention Center; and Intercollegiate Center for Nursing. Most school districts are implementing the program at the middle school level, reaching sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. However, in some districts the elementary levels are now being taught as well as part of their comprehensive drug, alcohol and violence prevention program.

The Life Skills Training curriculum focuses on three major components in an effort to reduce youth substance abuse. These areas are Drug Resistance Skills, Personal Self-Management Skills and General Social Skills. These three major components are spread throughout the curriculum in a sequential order that build upon previous lessons. When taught in its' entirety the curriculum is 30 lessons over a three year period with each lesson lasting approximately 45 minutes.

**Drug Resistance Skills:** Students learn to recognize and challenge common misconceptions about Alcohol, Tobacco and other drug use. Practical skills for dealing with peers are taught through coaching and practice. Students also learn how to resist media pressure to engage in ATOD use.

**Personal Self-Management:** Students learn to examine their self-image and how it affects their behavior as well as goal setting, decision-making, stress reduction, and how to positively analyze a problem while searching for a solution.

**General Social Skills:** In these lessons students learn necessary skills to overcome shyness, communicate effectively, avoid misunderstandings, engage and end a conversation, utilize verbal and nonverbal assertive skills as well as ways to deal with difficult situations.

This past June, ESD 101 invested in the continuation and growth of the program by having a staff person trained as a Trainer of Teachers for the Life Skills Training curriculum. She is able to conduct teacher trainings and provide technical assistance throughout the ESD 101 region, which serves seven counties and 59 school districts. Having a LST trainer in house will save our schools, county partners and other agencies money, as well as provide quality serve to schools wishing to implement.

Research provided by the LST research evaluation show:

- The LST program can reduce regular smoking by 56-66%;
- Studies demonstrate that students who participate in the LST program are less likely to drink alcohol, drink heavily and to report getting drunk when compared with those who did not receive the program. Reports show 54-79% less drinking among LST students; and
- The LST curriculum has been found to be effective with diverse populations.

***"I have taught Life Skills for 5 years now and have had tremendous support from staff and administration. I enjoy teaching this curriculum as it allows a lot of interaction among and with the students."***  
Tina Heimbinger  
Student Assistance Specialist  
Kettle Falls and Harrington School Districts

Tobacco Prevention & Control 2005 Annual ConferenceInternet